

Employing O&M Specialists



Some tips for recruitment teams

Orientation and Mobility (O&M) employers in Australia and New Zealand recruit both locally and internationally. The O&M workforce is enriched by the diverse career pathways, qualifications, languages, cultural and practical experiences of its members. But how does a recruitment team know if an applicant's O&M qualifications are adequate?

The Orientation and Mobility Association of Australasia (OMAA) is the peak professional body that advocates for the industry standards for professional registration of O&M specialists in Australia and New Zealand. The OMAA can also support those who have diverse O&M training programs to measure these programmes against international standards for O&M qualifications. OMAA defines an O&M Specialist as having had a comprehensive O&M training programme equivalent to ACVREP, or preferably, ROMSA.

ROMSA – a Registered O&M Specialist in Australasia

Recruitment teams can search the [O&M Directory](#) on the OMAA website to check an O&M specialist's credentials. An applicant for OMAA Registration must:

- develop independent community travel skills and competent daily living skills with simulated blindness/low vision, to embody O&M knowledge (minimum 80 hours)
- become a Certified O&M Specialist (COMS) which requires:
 - completing a comprehensive, COMS-compliant O&M qualification
 - completing a 350 hour COMS-supervised internship, or equivalent
 - passing the international COMS exam
 - completing recertification requirements every 5 years to maintain COMS and informing OMAA of successful recertification
- maintain ordinary OMAA membership, with annual fees and mandatory declarations about ethical standards, insurance, and fitness to practise.

Why COMS?

There are many pathways to becoming an O&M specialist. The COMS program provides an international benchmark for the academic standards, body of knowledge, and workplace experience required for entry level O&M specialists, as well as professional development requirements to recertify every five years. The COMS Handbook is available at <https://www.acvrep.org/certifications/coms>. See also two OMAA Factsheets on applying for COMS and ROMSA, found at [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Not yet COMS/ROMSA?

A job applicant might be a new graduate, returning to work after extended leave, or applying from overseas, and not yet be an OMAA member, or have considered COMS Registration. An OMAA Professional Standards Committee member can provide information that will assist an individual or recruitment team to evaluate an O&M applicant's learning pathways already undertaken, in terms of completion of core domains needed for OMAA membership. The authorising body responsible for issuing the COMS qualification, the Academy for the Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP), encourages all individuals seeking this internationally recognised qualification to contact them directly for

support during the process to attainment, information at [Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist \(COMS\)](#). Even if COMS is not sought, OMAA membership is likely to be directly relevant to the way some external organisations view the O&M specialisation, so working towards OMAA membership may create greater professional certainty into the future. Contact standards@omaaustralasia.com for more information.

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